

**Remarks prepared for
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway traffic Safety Administration
For
The Decade of Action for Road Safety &
National Youth Traffic Safety Month Launch
Washington, DC
May 11, 2011**

Thank you for the warm welcome. It is my pleasure to tell you about the National Organizations for Youth Safety effort to recognize the work being done to save the lives of teen drivers by raising awareness of safety issues pertaining to young drivers. Young members of the National Organizations for Youth Safety nominated and selected nonprofit organizations, business and industry leaders, and legislative representatives to be recognized with the first annual NOYS Youth Choice Awards.

Youth from across the country selected Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar to receive the 2011 Legislative Representative NOYS Youth Choice Award. I can think of no one more dedicated to serving the public than Senator Klobuchar. She has been a long-time advocate for traffic safety and her successes include helping to pass a law in her home state that bans texting-while-driving as well as sponsoring several national bills that support teen driver safety. Senator Klobuchar's efforts have not only saved lives of teen driver's across the state, but she accomplished her efforts by involving youth in her campaign, including them in her press conferences, and engaging them on a personal level. I am honored to present Senator Klobuchar this recognition to thank her for her outstanding support for youth traffic safety.

Senator Klobuchar will make brief acceptance remarks. Norman Mineta will speak again, and ask you back up to the podium.

At the United States Department of Transportation, our core mission is to help Americans move safely from one place to another. Crashes can happen in the blink of an eye and have devastating, long-term consequences. So our solemn obligation – the responsibility with which the American people have entrusted us – is to help prevent those crashes. President Barack Obama, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, and I do not take that trust lightly.

Our work to keep the motoring public safe requires a comprehensive effort that includes strong traffic safety laws, safer vehicle design, safer roads, and safer bridges. It is an interconnected effort that can, over time, develop and evolve a national traffic safety culture. Today, we are pleased to join with governments, international organizations and civil society organizations from around the world as we launch the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

Much of the progress we have made is predicated squarely on the safety partnerships the Department has established and maintained over the years, both with other federal agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and the Office of National Drug Control Policy, state transportation officials, and with safety groups such as the National Organization for Youth Safety. We could not have made the progress we have without you.

And within the Department of Transportation, NHTSA is joined by our sister administrations, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration who share my commitment to roadway safety.

From regulating commercial operators to building better infrastructure, our partnership with these two agencies is a logical extension of our work. For example, we are extremely encouraged by \$1.27 billion in ARRA funds that were specifically directed toward improving safety, including the building of hundreds of miles of rumble strips and cable median barriers.

However, this is just the tip of the iceberg. All highway projects built with federal highway funds have been designed according to the latest safety standards, with many including wider shoulders, newer and more effective guardrails, and bike and pedestrian facilities.

The latest numbers from our NHTSA data programs tell us we're on target with our programs. The numbers are trending downward, and we are moving aggressively to keep them headed in that direction. But nearly 33,000 people killed in one year is a national health problem and we will use every tool at our disposal to keep saving lives.

Our data shows that the vast majority of crashes occur because of dangerous behavior, including, driving drunk, driving while distracted, and driving too fast. We are hopeful that, along with efforts to build upon our successful safety programs, we can harness technology to help mitigate the effects of risky behavior.

We believe we're on the threshold of a new safety era that will revolve around safe vehicle designs and emerging technologies. Crash avoidance technologies provide an opportunity to save lives and reduce injuries by preventing crashes from occurring in the first place. Some of these technologies include vehicle-to-vehicle communication, as well as vehicle-to-infrastructure communication. We believe vehicle-to-vehicle safety applications could address 80 percent of crash scenarios involving non-impaired drivers.

Let's look at Distracted Driving, for example. Mobile electronic devices have become an integral part of our daily lives. It seems we demand to be connected at all times, and seemingly at all costs. Under Secretary LaHood's leadership, we are working to educate the public about safety and distraction behind the wheel of a vehicle.

In addition to reaching out to drivers, NHTSA is developing an evaluative framework for in-car technologies. We are taking a hard look at these systems and we have challenged the auto industry and the cell phone industry to work collaboratively with us to keep the driver focused on their required task: driving.

Distraction is particularly deadly for our young drivers, which is why the Department is working to reduce the risks to younger drivers. Young drivers lack experience and they take risks. For Americans in almost every age group between 3 and 33, the leading cause of death is motor vehicle crashes. And the danger is especially great for teenagers.

Another part of our approach is working with motor vehicle administrators, educators, law enforcement, and parent organizations to promote the enactment and enforcement of effective graduated drivers' licenses, or GDLs. GDLs allow young drivers to gradually gain the skills they need to safely operate their vehicles.

Our State and safety partners have also been working at making our youth safer on our highways – including efforts with young people themselves.

To give youth a voice in this effort a Public Service Announcement contest was hosted by the National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS) and The National Road Safety Foundation. This effort is one part of a comprehensive effort to have young people actively engaged in efforts to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities in their age group.

The winner of this contest is here with us today. Please join me in congratulating Lauren Daniels from Oswego, New York and watch with me the first release of this youth-developed PSA.

NOYS youth also spent the month of May celebrating the outstanding work and collaborative youth traffic safety efforts of leaders around the country. Youth have nominated non-profits, business and industry leaders and legislative leaders to recognize for their sustained efforts to save lives and reduce youth crashes and injuries.

The award to a Non-profit organization goes to the: “Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)” accepting will be Board Chair Denise Morris and FCCLA youth.

**The award to a Business and Industry Leader goes to:
“The Allstate Foundation” accepting will be Stacy
Sharpe.**

(end of your presentation)